IS EVERY TAGHUT A KAFIR ?

REVISED EDITION

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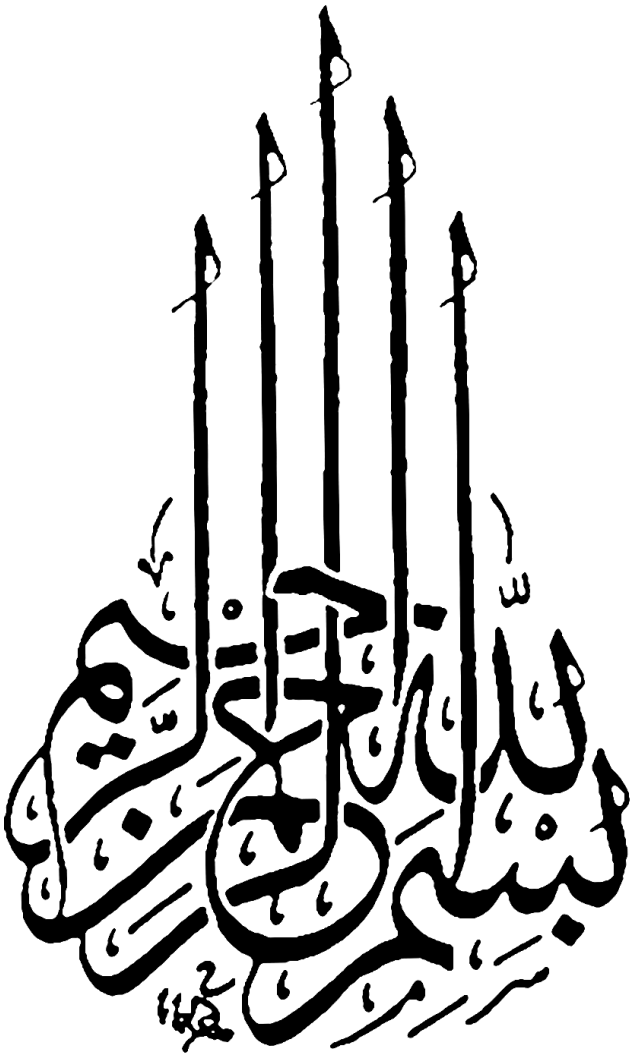
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

"Those who err in both the evidence and the import, such as the groups of the people of *bida'* who believe in a school of thought that opposes the truth which the moderate group (i.e., Ahlus-Sunnah) holds onto...they misinterpret what disagrees with their school of thought by distorting words from their proper usages."

Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah Usul at-Tafsir*

All praise belongs to Allah. And may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the Messenger of Allah. As for what follows...

In this essay the question in the title will be succinctly addressed, *bi-ithnillah*. Those who may be already relatively familiar with the Quran, the Sunnah, and the speech of the *'ulama* may find the answer self-evident; nevertheless, at times some individuals promote views that are in actuality a distortion of the subject matter and are not accurate in relaying the views of leading scholars of Islam. The consequence of such is the truth being covered up and falsehood spreading. And thus it becomes necessary to respond.

In an article entitled "The Meaning of Taghut and it's Relation to Kufr, Judgment and the Rulers,"[1] Abu Khadijah of the UK, a leader of the Madkhali sect,[2] sought to paint a different picture than the obvious fact that when *taghut* is employed in reference to a person, a *kafir* is always meant. By compiling some statements of scholars vis-a-vis the meaning of *taghut,* misinterpreting them in a way their original authors did not intend, or by failing to collect and analyze all the statements of one scholar in order to correctly understand what he meant, he makes a claim that a *taghut* can be a Muslim. He begins with the sub-heading: "The Meaning of Taghut According to the Early Scholars & That It Does Not Necessitate Kufr in Every Case." You may wonder as to why would he think it was necessary to post such an article? (Considering that the issue isn't something controversial or disputed, at all.) Rather than assuming about his intentions, he lets the reader know soon after:

> The word taghut is mentioned in several places throughout the Quran and its meaning is distorted by the radical preachers to refer to the disbelievers or to

1 This is how it appears in the original.

2 See the surprisingly accurate portrayal of this sect at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madkhalism.

> major idolatry, and since some of the great scholars mentioned in their writings that 'the one who does not rule by that which Allah has revealed' is a taghut, then they conclude that all of the rulers are therefore disbelievers.

So it would appear, and one can pretty accurately conclude, that the impetus behind such an article was to defend those who rule by man-made laws, as is the want of the Madkhali sect (in contrast to a valid academic claim of neutrality of examining texts and arriving at a conclusion). And since he admits some of the greatest scholars mentioned that whoever rules by other than what Allah revealed is a *taghut* (in particular Shaykh al-Mujaddid Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab), it presents a very problematic situation for defenders of such rulers. Because according to principles the Madkhali sect founded to staunchly guard certain regimes, no matter their crimes committed against Allah and His creation, anyone that declares rulers *kuffar* is a 'dog of Hell', irregardless if the reason is due to an agreed upon nullifier of *iman*. And thus, unless they say the same about Shaykh Muhammad (in which case their claim to be 'Salafi' is again belied), his speech must be molded (or crammed) into their box of principles.

He asserts "the term taghut can refer to the unbelievers and to the heads of misguidance from the Muslims." How did he arrive at this conclusion? And who exactly preceded him in that view? This is what he sought to exhibit, and this is what will be examined, *in sha Allah*.

Leaders of Misguidance

After putting forward the claim that the *'ulama* essentially stated heads of misguidance are 'Muslim *tawaghit'* he calls on several Muslim authorities in an attempt to substantiate it. Those relevant to heads of misguidance that he mentioned will be quoted verbatim below.

1. Imam al-Jawhari stated in *As-Sihah:* "*At-taghut:* the soothsayer, *shaytan*, and every leader of misguidance."
2. Ibn Mandhur stated: "*At-taghut:* Whatever is worshiped besides Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; and every leader of misguidance is a *taghut*."
3. He said, also: "Ash-Sha'bi, 'Ata, and Mujahid all said: 'The sorcerer, the magician. The *taghut* is *shaytan*, the soothsayer, and every head of misguidance.' "
4. Regarding the statement of Allah: "And We sent a messenger to every nation calling

> them to the worship of Allah and to abandon the *taghut*," al-Qurtubi in his *tafsir* stated: "Meaning: abandon everything that is worshiped besides Allah, such as *shaytan*, the soothsayers, the idols, and everyone that calls to misguidance."

If you were asked to point with your finger at the quote that makes any mention of a Muslim, or mentions a Muslim can be a *taghut* or a *taghut* a Muslim, which one would that be? What is mentioned is only that the leaders and heads of misguidance (*dalala*) are *tawaghit*. It will never be right to interpret the statements of others in a fashion that they did not intend. And this is particularly so dealing with the speech of the people of knowledge in reference to matters of the *din*. Abu Khadijah brings no further evidence for his claim and merely makes an outlandish interpretation of their statements that fits inside an already set agenda.

When the meaning of *taghut* is known beforehand by reading (and understanding) what the *'ulama* have written on the topic, the quotations above carry no problem - whatsoever. Because when one knows the truth of a certain matter to begin with, one can sift through the falsehood and see them clearly, by Allah's permission. But when one does not have sufficient knowledge, it is quite easy to be misled and 'dazzled', so to speak. May Allah protect us. You would be hard pressed to find any student of knowledge in confusion over the above statements. The heads of *dalala* are simply referring to the callers and leaders of *kufr* and *shirk.* They are *tawaghit,* in comparison to the layman from the *kuffar* and *mushrikin* who are not. And here is a good place to shed some light on the meaning of *taghut* from the Quran and the *'ulama* so as to adequately answer the question 'is every *taghut* a *kafir*?'.

The Meaning of Taghut in the Quran

First, let's see how *'taghut'* is used in the Quran, mentioned a total of eight times throughout:

1. "There is no compulsion in the *din*. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. So whoever disbelieves in the *taghut* and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is

All-Hearer, All-Knower."[3]

2. "Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light. But as for those who disbelieve, their helpers and allies are *taghut*, they bring them out from light into darkness. Those are the dwellers of the Fire, and they will abide therein forever."[4]
3. "Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in *al-jibt* and the *taghut* and say to the disbelievers that they are better guided as regards the way than the believers."[5]
4. "Have you not seen those who claim to believe in what was sent down to you and what was sent down before you? They wish to go for judgment to the *taghut* while they have been ordered to disbelieve in it. And *shaytan* wishes to lead them far astray."[6]
5. "Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah. While those who disbelieve fight in the cause of the *taghut*. So fight against the allies of *shaytan*; verily, the plot of *shaytan* is weak."[7]
6. "Say: 'Shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding the recompense from Allah: those (Jews) who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, and those of whom He transformed into monkeys and pigs, and those who worshiped the *taghut;* such are worse in rank, and far more astray from the right path.' "[8]
7. "And verily, We have sent among every group of people a messenger [ordering]: 'worship Allah and avoid the *taghut*.' Then of them were some whom Allah guided and of them were some whom the straying was justified. So travel through the land and see what was the end of those who denied."[9]
8. "And those who avoid the *taghut* by not worshiping it and turn to Allah, for them

3 Surah al-Baqarah: 256.

4 Surah al-Baqarah: 257.

5 Surah an-Nisa: 51.

6 Surah an-Nisa: 60.

7 Surah an-Nisa: 76.

8 Surah al-Maidah: 60.

9 Surah an-Nahl: 36.

> are glad tidings; so announce the good news to My slaves."[10]

There is no reference to a Muslim being a *taghut* in the above *ayat*. What of its derivative '*tagha*'? Let's take a look.

1. "Go to Fir'awn; he has, indeed, *tagha* (transgressed beyond bounds)."[11]
2. "Both of you (i.e., Musa and Harun) go to Fir'awn; verily, he has *tagha*."[12]
3. "As for him who *tagha* and preferred the life of this world, his abode, indeed, will be Hell."[13]

Again, no Muslim is being referred to. A leader in *kufr* and one of the biggest *tawaghit*, Fir'awn, is being addressed, along with the *kafir*. But since the original claim was in relation to some scholars using the term '*taghut*' in reference to a Muslim, light will be shown on their speech, *in sha Allah*.

The Definition 'Ulama Mentioned for Taghut

The definition of *taghut,* Shaykh 'Ali al-Khudayr (*fakkallahu asrahu*) outlined is:

> ...a particular type of excess derived from *tughyan* which is to exceed, to go beyond, and to increase. From it is "*tagha al-ma*" (translated as: the water rose above its limits), meaning: increased... The terms the Salaf used in defining it differed. Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that 'Umar ibnul-Khattab (*radiyallahu 'anhu*) said that 'the *taghut* is the *shaytan*.' Jabir mentioned that it is the soothsayer. Malik said: 'It is what is worshiped besides Allah.' Muhammad ibn Sirin said that the *taghut* is the sorcerer, and it was said 'the transgressors from the People of the Book.' Ibnul-Jawzi made reference in *Zad al-Masir*, in his explanation of the Verse of the Throne, when examining these various definitions that they are from the category of exegesis by some of its features.

10 Surah az-Zumar: 17.

11 Surah Ta-Ha: 24.

12 Surah Ta-Ha: 43.

13 Surah an-Nazi'at: 37-9.

> The comprehensive explanation of *taghut* is the definition of ibnul-Qayyim (*rahimahullah*), 'The *taghut* is that which exceeds its limit through the slave, whether by being worshiped, followed, or obeyed.' 'Worshiped' is what 'Umar and Malik mentioned. 'Followed' includes the transgressors from the People of Book. 'Obeyed' includes the sorcerer, the soothsayer, every ruler, and includes the evil scholars, evil leaders, and evil worshipers.
>
> And in this there is a more precise qualification than ibnul-Qayyim's: Each and every going beyond in *kufr*. For example, the one who leaves the *salah* is a *kafir*; but if he calls to abandon the *salah* or punishes whoever performs it, then this is exceeding the bounds in *kufr*, and he is a *taghut*. It is *shirk* to sacrifice for other than Allah; so if he calls to sacrifice for other than Allah or beautifies it [in the eyes of the people], then this is exceeding the bounds in *kufr*, and he is a *taghut*.
>
> Taken from ibnul-Qayyim's definition are three types of *tawaghit*: (i) the *tawaghit* of worship, and included in that is whoever is worshiped besides Allah while being pleased with it, whoever calls the people to the worship of himself. *shaytan* enters into that, as well, along with the idols; (ii) the *tawaghit* of following, which includes scholars and worshipers: the evil scholars and the devious worshipers; (iii) the *tawaghit* of obedience, and it includes the leaders and heads of tribes who make matters permissible or impermissible besides Allah. Likewise, soothsayers, magicians, legislators, and the rulers who rule by other than what Allah revealed.[14]

"The *taghut,"* Mujahid (d. 102 H - *rahimahullah*) said, "is *shaytan* in the form of man whom they seek judgment from."[15] While an-Nawawi (d. 676 H - *rahimahullah*) related that "al-Layth, Abu 'Ubaydah, al-Kisa'i, and the majority of linguists said that the *taghut* is anything that is worshiped other than Allah (*ta'ala*). Ibn 'Abbas, Muqatil, al-Kalbi, and others, stated that the *taghut* is the *shaytan*. It was said it is the idols, as well. Al-Wahidi said

14 See the end of his elucidation of *Usul ath-Thalathah*.

15 See *Tafsir ibn Kathir* and the explanation of an-Nisa: 51.

that the *taghut* could be singular or plural, female or male."[16] Speaking himself, al-Wahidi (d. 468 H - *rahimahullah*), a distinguished scholar of the Arabic language, related: "All the scholars of the language said that the *taghut* is anything that is worshiped besides Allah."[17] "Some of the scholars said," ibn ʻAtiyyah (d. 541 H - *rahimahullah*) related, "Everything that is worshiped besides Allah is a *taghut*. And this labeling is correct with respect to what is worshiped and is pleased with that like Firʻawn and Nimrod and so forth. But as for those who are not pleased with such things like ʻUzayr and ʻIsa (*ʻalayhimas-salam*), and those who do not have any intelligence, like the idols, the labeling is in relation to the right of the slaves - and that is exceeding the boundaries. As it is, the *taghut* that orders them and beautifies that for them is the Shaytan."[18] Al-ʻAllamah ibnul-Qayyim (d. 751 H-*rahimahullah*), referenced earlier by Shaykh ʻAli al-Khudayr, stated:

> The *taghut* is anything by which the slave transgresses the limits through worship, following, or obedience. Thus the *taghut* of any people is he who they seek judgment from other than Allah and His messenger, or whom they worship alongside Allah, or who they follow without guidance from Allah, or who they obey in what they do not know to be obedience to Allah. Those are the *tawaghit* of the world; if you were to contemplate them and, at the same time, contemplate the condition of the people, you would see that most people have turned from the worship of Allah to the worship of the *taghut*, from seeking judgment from Allah and His messenger to seeking judgment from the *taghut*, and from obeying and following Allah and His messenger, to obeying and following the *taghut*.[19]

After citing statements of *ahlul-ʻilm* from the Salaf concerning the definition of *taghut* (a lot of which were mentioned above), and that entering within it is whoever ruled by other than what Allah revealed or seeks the ruling from it (i.e., the *taghut*), citing Hafidh ibn Kathir and some of the Salaf, Shaykh ʻAbdullah ibn ʻAbdir-Rahman Abu Butayn an-Najdi stated:

16 See his elucidation on *Sahih Muslim*, ch. "Kitab al-Iman".

17 Shaykh Abu Butayn quotes him in *Ad-Durar, as-Saniyyah*, v. 2, p. 300.

18 *Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-ʻAziz.*

19 *I'lam al-Muwaqqiʻin*.

> The conclusion from gathering their statements, may Allah (*ta'ala*) have mercy on them, is that the term *'taghut'* includes everything that is worshiped besides Allah; it includes every leader in misguidance who invites to falsehood and beautifies it; and it includes everyone the people appoint to judge between themselves in accordance to the rulings of *jahiliyyah* in opposition to the ruling of Allah and His messenger.[20]

"That which we find in the statements of the Salaf *(radiyallahu 'anhum),"* Shaykh Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi (d. 1378 H - *rahimahullah*) mentioned, "is that the *taghut* is whatever deviates the slave away and prevents him from the worship of Allah, being sincere to Him in the *din* and in obeying Allah and His messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), whether that is from the devils of *jinn* or from the devils of men, or trees, rocks, etc. Entering within that, without any doubt, is ruling by man-made laws..."[21]

"The *tahqiq* (trans. the final conclusion after research)," Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin ash-Shanqiti (d. 1393 H - *rahimahullah*) declared, "is that anything that is worshiped besides Allah is a *taghut*; the greatest of which is *shaytan*."[22]

Replying to the question: "What is the meaning of *taghut*? And is every *taghut* a *kafir?"* Salih al-Fawzan replied:

> *Taghut* linguistically is derived from *tughyan*, and it is exceeding the limits. Going beyond the truth to falsehood, going beyond *iman* to *kufr*, and what is similar to that. The *tawaghit* are many, and every *taghut* is a *kafir*, without a doubt.[23]

This last quote from Salih al-Fawzan is one of the utmost clearest ones one will find while researching this issue. That is possibly because he was asked and answered in such a lucid manner and for the fact the issue itself is clear. Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim has various statements on the definition of '*taghut*' that do not fall out of line with the above sayings,

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20 See *Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah*, v. 2, pp. 299-302 for his full definition of the *taghut*.

21 See his notes upon *Fath al-Majid*, ch. "Ma Ja'a fi as-Sihr".

22 See his *tafsir* of *surah* al-Baqarah in *Adwan al-Bayan*.

23 See link for the full answer https://www.alfawzan.af.org.sa/en/node/10323.

but in his elucidation of *Usul ath-Thalathalah* he asserted with almost the same clarity as Salih al-Fawzan after mentioning ibnul-Qayyim's definition of *taghut:* "And every one [of them] is a *kafir*."

The main quotes or references from scholars some suggested portrayed something different than the above consensus were from contemporaries such as ibn 'Uthaymin, who said specifically that heads of *bida'* were *tawaghit* (in place of heads of *dalala*). But that is nowhere clear enough to make the claim a Muslim can be a *taghut;* and in all likelihood it is strictly in reference to *bida'* that is major *kufr,* like saying the Quran is created or that *iman* is only a belief in the heart or negating the attributes of Allah, etc. - all of which is a *bida'*, in addition to being *kufr*. We have ample amounts of statements from the *Salaf* proclaiming *takfir* upon the people of *bida'* and their heads, e.g. Jahm ibn Safwan and the Jahmiyyah.

Another quote utilized was from ibn Baz; however, his words also were misunderstood. It seemed evident after reading the context that he was speaking about the action that exceeds the limits into *kufr*, and not the label '*taghut*', that at times one is a *kafir* and at other times, not. That is uncontroversial and does not affect the current inquiry because differentiating between the act and the actor in relation to *takfir* of a specific person is something well known, albeit still a matter that is greatly misunderstood in our time.

Having said all that, this isn't an essay on what ibn Baz or ibn 'Uthaymin meant. They are simply mentioned due to the scarcity of referenced authorities employing the usage of '*taghut*' for a Muslim. What should be clarified here, though, is the misunderstanding that may arise in saying that 'not every *taghut* is a *kafir';* because technically that is true. This becomes clear with an example. A tree or a rock or a statue is not a *kafir*. One would not say inanimate objects are *kuffar*. Nor are they considered *tawaghit* just by themselves. They become *tawaghit* when the slaves exceed their right with respect to worship. And this qualifies the statement from ibn 'Atiyyah above that "the labeling is in relation to the right of the slaves - and that is exceeding the boundaries." Thus those objects become *tawaghit* when they are worshiped besides Allah; and to be considered a Muslim, it is a must for one to disbelieve that they have any right to be worshiped. But in regard to the label of *'taghut'* being applied upon a person or a *jinn* (like *shaytan* or someone who rules by other than what Allah revealed) then this is equivalent to *takfir* and labeling someone a *kafir*. It is this second labeling that Salih al-Fawzan is referring to in his statement that "every *taghut* is a

kafir, without a doubt."

Ar-Risalah Ila Ahlil-Qasim (The Letter to the People of Qasim)

Many people have an incorrect understanding of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ʻAbdil-Wahhab (*rahimahullah*) and the scholars of Najd. They assume that the leading scholars of the *salafi* call (*aimmah ad-da'wah as-salafiyyah)* strictly concerned themselves with the *shirk* of the grave-worshipers. This couldn't be further from the truth. Shaykh Muhammad and the leading scholars traversed a blessed methodology in teaching and spreading all parts of *tawhid*, while tackling and addressing all forms of *shirk*. They mentioned from the heads of the *tawaghit* is the ruler who judges by other than what Allah revealed and that the *taghut* is of two types: one in relation to worship and the other in relation to ruling and judgment. "Thus whoever judges in accordance with other than the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His messenger," the grandson of Shaykh Muhammad, Shaykh ʻAbdur-Rahman ibn Hasan, stated, "then he has judged in accordance with the *taghut* which Allah (*taʻala*) has commanded His believing slaves to disbelieve in... Similarly, whoever worships anything other than Allah has worshiped the *taghut*."[24]

And since he and the scholars of Najd helped revive the methodology (*manhaj*) and creed (ʻ*aqidah*) of the Salaf for this *ummah,* many individuals and groups attempt to latch on to them as a way to appeal to authority and give themselves legitimacy. Abu Khadijah attempts that ploy here:

> It is somewhat surprising that modern-day radicals should attempt to utilise the statements of Shaikh Muhammad bin ʻAbdul-Wahhab (rahimahullah) to support their argument, since he was from the scholars who consistently warned from the performance of takfir and from disobeying the Muslim rulers, even if they be from the most tyrannical of rulers, as he has expressed in the famous letter to the people of al-Qasim, ar-Risalah ila Ahlil-Qasim.

24 See his comments in *Fath al-Majd,* ch. 38.

The letter to the people of Qasim being made reference to is Shaykh Muhammad (*rahimahullah*) explaining his '*aqidah* due to the lies and rumors misguided people began to spread - people who share the same qualities as the Madkhali sect, attributing views to the callers to *tawhid* today that they themselves do not hold. It is a scare tactic in order to frighten people away from the truth. There was a need to clarify his '*aqidah* and *manhaj* for that reason. In that letter, ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab essentially summarizes *Al-'Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah* by Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah; and it is the *'aqidah* and *manhaj* of Ahlus-Sunnah. Part of it is obeying the Muslim ruler, even if he is not righteous.

It is very misleading to say unrestrictedly that "he was from the scholars who consistently warned from the performance of *takfir*". That is not factually accurate. Rather, he simply did not declare *takfir* of the Muslim (refuting that claim in numerous places throughout his collected works) and declared *takfir* of the *mushrik,* even if that one claimed to be a Muslim (proving that the claim to Islam is not enough to prevent *takfir* throughout his collected works). Contrary to the description Abu Khadijah paints, Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab rebuked those who depreciated *takfir* of those who deserved it.

"O my brothers!" Shaykh Muhammad said advising his students and brothers in *tawhid*, "Allah! Allah! Hold onto the foundation of your *din* - its beginning, its end, its core, and its head: the testimony that *la ilaha illallah*. Learn its meaning; love it; love its people; and make them your brothers, even if they are far away. Disbelieve in the *tawaghit;* oppose and hate them and whoever loves them or defends them, or does not declare *takfir* of them, or says nothing is upon them in relation to them, or that 'Allah has not obligated me anything in relation to them.' Verily, whoever said that has fabricated a lie against Allah. Allah has indeed obligated to disbelieve in them and to disassociate from them, even if they were your brothers and children. So Allah! Allah! Hold steadfast upon that so that perhaps you may meet your Lord not having committed any *shirk* with Him. O Allah! take us as Muslims and join us with the righteous."[25]

"Those *tawaghit* whom the people believe in, commend, and order others with, from the people of al-Kharaj and others well-known and famous to all," Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab said about some individuals, "are all *kuffar* apostates from Islam. Whoever argues for them,

25 See *Majmu' Rasail at-Tawhid wal-Iman*, v. 1, p. 368.

or rebukes whoever declares *takfir* of them, or claims that their actions - although wrong - does not take them to *kufr*, then, the least one can say about this defender is that he is a *fasiq*; advice is not taken from him nor his testimony [accepted], and *salah* is not performed behind him."[26] Can this be reconciled with Abu Khadijah's claim that "he was from the scholars who consistently warned from the performance of *takfir*"? Or is the case, in fact, that he was from the scholars who consistently warned from *not* declaring *takfir*?

It is true that within the referenced letter it mentions obedience to the Muslim ruler (emphasis on *Muslim*). Be that as it may, it is a lie upon him that he considered one a Muslim ruler who rules by other than what Allah revealed. He made the one who fits that description from the heads of the *tawaghit*. And Abu Khadijah and the Madkhali sect are aware of this; that is why he posted the article to begin with - to come to the aid of the *tawaghit* by misrepresenting the views of Shaykh al-Mujaddid Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab.[27]

If the label '*taghut*' can be downgraded so as to encompass a Muslim ruler in its definition (Allah knows best if the same textual acrobatics would be on display for those not in authority), then the speech of '*ulama* declaring those who rule by other than what Allah revealed[28] as *tawaghit* can be interpreted to mean sinful Muslim rulers; and since the Khawarij declare *takfir* of sinful Muslim rulers and fight them, everyone who declares the *tawaghit* to be *kuffar* and rebels against their authority is a Khariji. A gross, downward spiraled web of falsehood.

The Taghut According to Shaykh al-Mujaddid Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab

"The *taghut* is general," Shaykh Muhammad says defining the *taghut.* "Anything that is worshiped besides Allah, being pleased with that worship - whether he is worshiped or followed or obeyed in other than the obedience of Allah and His messenger - is a *taghut.*"

26 See *Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah*, v. 10, p. 52.

27 It will be highlighted below that he isn't the original author.

28 Like modern regimes and its leaders do in many issues - as is not hidden.

He then numbers the biggest of these into five:

1. *Shaytan*.
2. The oppressive ruler who changes the rulings of Allah.
3. The one who rules by other than what Allah has revealed.
4. The one who claims knowledge of the unseen.
5. The one who is pleased with being worshiped.[29]

A sixth one, when taken altogether, is mentioned in another famous writing of his (and from which Abu Khadijah quotes): the one who calls people to worship him. This one could fall into no. 5 above, however. One may ask: "What is the difference between no. 2 and no. 3, then?" These two could also fall into one category, also; as they do at the end of *Usul ath-Thalathah*. But if we were to mention the slight difference, the ruler who judges by other than what Allah has revealed would include those who rule by tribal codes or laws from Europe and America or by the U.N., etc. As for the oppressive ruler who changes the rulings of Allah, what is meant by that is the one who promulgates a ruling from his whims in contradiction to the ruling of Allah. And if nothing else, the mention of both is to stress the severity of judging between people and over issues in accordance to something that contravenes what Allah revealed to His final messenger (*sallallahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*).

Interestingly enough, each category that branch out into two distinct types of *tawaghit* in one place and combined into one type in another place (the ruler who rules by other than what Allah revealed and the one who is pleased with being worshiped), are the two types of *tawaghit* mentioned previously: (i) the *taghut* of ruling and (ii) the *taghut* of worship. Coming to the defense of such *tawaghit*, Abu Khadijah clamors that

> some may understand from this that the Shaikh is declaring as an unbeliever the one who rules by other than what Allah has revealed. However, this is not the case for two reasons: Firsty,[30] due to the consensus from Ibn ʿAbdul-Barr who narrated that ruling by other than what Allāh has revealed constitutes minor disbelief that does not exit from the fold of Islām (At-Tamhīd of Ibn ʿAbdul-Barr, 5/74-75)...

29 See *Majmuʿah Rasail fi at-Tawhid wal-Iman*, essay no. 6.

30 Copied verbatim.

Everyone, except some within a marginalized circle set on guarding rulers who commit crimes against Allah and His creation and who already have a set agenda to distort any text that may be used to prove the rulers' illegitimacy, understands that Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab is declaring the ruler who rules by other than what Allah revealed a *kafir*. One obvious reason (besides calling him a *taghut*) being what he says before and after numbering the heads of the *tawaghit* in *Usul ath-Thalathah* that Abu Khadijah cites from. "Allah enjoined upon all of the slaves," Shaykh Muhammad exclaims, "to disbelieve in the *taghut* (*kufr bit-taghut*) and believe in Allah." "The proof," he states after mentioning the definition that ibnul-Qayyim outlined and the five heads of the *tawaghit*, "is His (*ta'ala*) statement: 'There is no compulsion in the *din*; the right path, indeed, has become distinct from the wrong path. Thus whoever disbelieves in the *taghut* and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold.' " It does not make sense, legally (*shar'an*) and intellectually ('*aqlan*), for him to be referring to anything but the *kafir* who has exceeded the limits into *kufr* and *shirk* with Allah.

"As for the description of *kufr bit-taghut*," Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab said elsewhere, "it is to believe in the invalidity of worship to other than Allah, to abandon it, to hate it, to declare *takfir* of its people, and to have animosity towards them." Analyzing the speech of Shaykh Muhammad collectively, if the *taghut* can be a Muslim, how could this be actualized? Quite frankly, it cannot. One may have been a Muslim beforehand; but as soon as he becomes a *taghut* he becomes an apostate (*murtadd*). It simply does not make sense for him to mention *taghut* in reference to a possible Muslim, while the *taghut* is one of the most severest of *kuffar!* And in the scholarly commentaries upon the words of ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab, not one states that by '*taghut*' he intends 'the sinful Muslim' when speaking about the one who rules by other than what Allah revealed. They may elaborate on the issue of ruling by other than what Allah revealed, but they do not claim what Abu Khadijah does - making it unfounded. And how apt does the statement of al-Yamani fit here:

> Sayings which are not supported by a scholar are not worth a penny.[31]

31 Quoted by Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab in *Mufid al-Mustafid fi Kufr Tarik at-Tawhid*.

Ruling by Other Than What Allah Revealed

For the Madkhali sect (and others like them who resemble the Murjiah in their understanding of *iman* and *kufr*), all forms of not ruling by what Allah revealed never reach major *kufr* unless the ruler says that in his heart he rejects the ruling of Allah or he states he believes it is permissible for him to not rule by what Allah revealed - delegating all the manifestations of not ruling by what Allah revealed to the camp of sins less than *kufr,* except the former two.[32] So any clear proof or statement from the '*ulama* clearly portraying the issue differently, is misinterpreted to fall in-line with that. The whole article under scrutiny is an extreme example of that and highlights the lengths they are willing to go.

The consensus Imam ibn 'Abdil-Barr (*rahimahullah*) relates is commonly referred to and employed as a shield for rulers who judge by other than what Allah revealed (i.e., the *tawaghit*). Thus it is no surprise that it is mentioned here. After commenting upon the *hadith* of Abu Hurayrah about the seven destructive sins, one of them being *shirk* with Allah, ibn 'Abdil-Barr said in full:

> The scholars also agree that oppression (*jawr*) in ruling is from the *kaba'ir* - for whoever intentionally and knowingly does it. Related concerning that are substantial narrations from the Salaf. Allah (*'azza wa jall*) said: 'And whoever does not judge by what Allah revealed, then it is those who are the disbelievers (*kafirun*)', and 'oppressors (*dhalimun*)', and 'transgressors (*fasiqun*).' It was revealed about the People of the Book. Hudhayfah and ibn 'Abbas stated: 'It applies to us.' They (i.e., some of the Salaf) said: 'it is not the *kufr* that removes one from the path (*millah*) if a man from the people of this community (*ummah*) does it, unless he disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day.' This meaning has been narrated from a group of scholars explaining the Quran, including ibn 'Abbas, Tawus, and 'Ata. Allah (*'azza wa jall*) said: 'And as for the transgressing oppressors (*qasitun*), they shall be firewood for Jahannam.' And *'qasit'* is the oppressing tyrant (*adh-dhalim*

32 There have been numerous critiques of that view. For a good discussion on this issue in English, see al-Mahmud, *Man-Made Laws vs. Shari'ah*; al-Athari, *Refuting 'Abdur-Rahman Hasan*.

al-ja'ir).

What is evident from the words of Imam ibn 'Abdil-Barr is that he does *not* cite a consensus that ruling by other than what Allah revealed is minor *kufr*. If someone claims he does, it surely isn't found in this quote. Yes, he said the scholars "agree that *jawr* in ruling is from the *kaba'ir*." Meaning, it is on the same general level of destructiveness like the seven sins mentioned in the *hadith* he just related.[33] But taking his statement and interpreting it to mean that the scholars agree that ruling by other than what Allah revealed is not *kufr* can only be done by someone who is either (i) ignorant or (ii) someone with a set agenda (and in a lot of cases both).[34] What should be paid attention to is the word *'jawr',* as ibn 'Abdil-Barr is speaking about a specific form of not ruling by what Allah revealed.

Jawr in English could be translated something along the lines as 'unjust' and is similar to a more common term: 'injustice/oppression (*dhulm*).' In his explanation of *Sahih Muslim*, an-Nawawi stated that "*al-jawr* is turning away from fairness and justness; so anything that departs from justice is *al-jawr*. Irregardless whether it was something forbidden (*haram)* or disliked (*makruh)*." In relation to ruling, *jawr* generally takes the form of failing to apply the *shar'i* ruling in specific cases, which results in the loss of people's rights. This is the depiction being referred to.[35] If the ruler was to add to that and leave the basis of the law of Allah by turning to something else for judgment or by promulgating a ruling in clear opposition to the ruling Allah revealed, he would be a *kafir* by *ijma*'. "There is no dispute among two people from the Muslims," ibn Hazm states, "that this (i.e., the Injil) is abrogated and that whoever judges with the ruling of the Injil in a matter that does not have a clear text from the revelation of the law of Islam is a *kafir mushrik* who left the fold of Islam."[36] If this is the case with regards to someone seeking judgment from the Injil, then

33 It is the *hadith* of Abu Hurayrah where he reported the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) saying, "Fear the seven destructive sins." We asked, "What are they?" "*Shirk* with Allah," he replied, "killing a soul Allah forbade to be killed except when it is right (*bil-haqq*), fornication, taking *riba*, taking the orphan's wealth, false witness, and slandering chaste, believing women."

34 The Standing Committee for Scientific Research and Verdicts released a scathing verdict against whoever alleges Ahlus-Sunnah agreed that ruling by other than what Allah revealed in public legislature (*tashri 'am*) is minor *kufr*, calling it a "lie upon Ahlus-Sunnah, either due to ignorance or an evil intention." See *At-Tahdhir min al-Irja*, pp. 21-22.

35 For example, he rules in favor of a relative by fraudulent means or disparages a witness while the witness is upright and truthful.

36 See *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*, v. 5, p. 162.

what of the one who seeks judgment from what is lower than that? "Whoever leaves the legislated law revealed upon Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah, the Seal of the Prophets and seeks judgment from other than it from the abrogated laws disbelieves; so what of those who seek judgment from the Yasa[37] and place it over it?" Imam ibn Kathir said asking the same question rhetorically. "Whoever does that disbelieves according to the consensus of the Muslims."[38]

And so there are different forms not ruling by what Allah revealed can take; and it is not fathomable that ibn 'Abdil-Barr was referring to all depictions of not ruling by what Allah revealed. His words taken by themselves - without distortion or misinterpretation - are self-evident that he was speaking about one portrayal from among them.

Plagiarizing the Misunderstanding

The guided path of those endowed with knowledge is to shine light on ambiguous speech with speech that is lucid and unambiguous. While the path of those in whose hearts is a sickness is to do the opposite. They cling to what is ambiguous and leave what is clear. Allah (*tabaraka wa ta'ala*) said: "It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Within it are verses that are entirely clear (*muhkamat*), they are the foundation of the Book, with others not as clear (*mutashabihat*). As for those in whose hearts is a deviation, they follow that which is ambiguous thereof, seeking *fitnah* and its hidden meanings (*tawil*). But none knows its *tawil* except Allah..."[39] "Those who refer to the clear *ayat* to understand the ambiguous ones will indeed be guided," ibn Kathir reiterates. "And whoever does the opposite, will be misguided." A few lines later he spoke of "those in whose hearts there is a deviation, meaning, those who are misguided and deviate from truth to falsehood... they take what is ambiguous because it is possible for them to distort its meanings to conform with their corrupt aims." And thus Abu Khadijah does just that.

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37 The Yasa, also called the Yasaq or Yasiq, was the book of laws put together by Ghenghis Khan and subsequently sought judgment from by his descendants and followers who claimed to be Muslim.

38 See *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, v. 13, p. 128.

39 The *ayah* continues but there is a well-known dispute as to when to stop reading the *ayah*. See *Tafsir ibn Kathir* and the commentary on Al 'Imran, *ayah* no. 7.

and secondly that the term at-Taghut does not necessitate major disbelief. This is made very clear in the following statement of Shaikh Muhammad bin ʿAbdul-Wahhab :

"The taghuts are many, and the clear ones to us from them are five:

The first of them is Satan.

The tyrannical ruler.

The one who takes bribery.

The one who is worshiped and pleased with that.

The one who acts without knowledge."

So he considered that from the heads of the clear taghuts are: the tyrannical ruler, the one who takes bribes and the one who does not act upon knowledge – and these affairs constitute minor disbelief (al-kufr al-asghar) in their origin. Indeed the one who takes bribes is not an unbeliever outside of the fold of Islam by the consensus (ijmaʿ) of the scholars, unless he makes that permissible. So this makes it perfectly clear that the Shaikh and the scholars before him did not restrict the title at-Taghut to only the disbeliever, rather the term can also refer to a Muslim upon sin or tyranny or the one who does not act upon knowledge or the person of misguidance who misguides others, such as the ideological heads of the Kharijites.

First, before going further, it is appropriate to mention that Abu Khadijah did not come up with this article from his own thinking and reflection. And it could rightly be said he plagiarized them from a man named Abu ʿUmar Usamah al-ʿUtaybi, who wrote the above in Arabic.[40] Albeit, he threw in a little flavor by adding: "such as the ideological heads of the

40 "Plagiarism is the 'wrongful appropriation' and 'stealing and publication' of another author's ... and the representation of them as one's own original work. Plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty..." See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism.

Kharijites." In fact, the whole article is practically a word-for-word translation of the original Arabic version.[41]

Second, admittedly, the quoted text from Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab could be seen as problematic - if taken at face value without any knowledge or understanding. It is no accident that those bent on defending *tawaghit* would latch on to such ambiguous quote.

Indeed, the tyrannical ruler[42] or one who takes bribes or one who acts without knowledge could not be a *kafir* (let alone a *taghut*). But to understand what Shaykh Muhammad intended here by each, it is necessary to put them under the light of his clear speech and let his words clarify what he meant.

When comparing the unambiguous words of Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab with his ambiguous words, it becomes clear (with Allah's permission) that who he referred to as 'the ruler of injustice (*hakim al-jawr*)' was the type of ruler mentioned above: 'The oppressive ruler who changes the rulings of Allah (*al-hakim al-ja'ir al-mughayyir li-ahkam allah ta'ala*)'. The resemblance here is self-evident. The next one may not be as self-evident as that; however, reading the exegesis (*tafsir*) of the proof Shaykh Muhammad used after mentioning the *taghut* 'who rules by other than what Allah has revealed',[43] it is apparent that that is who he is referring to by 'the devourer of *riba*'. To quote a scholar of *tafsir*, al-Qasimi:

> It is related in this topic from ibn Mas'ud, al-Hasan [al-Basri], and an-Nakha'i that these three *ayat*[44] are general in its application to the Jews and this ummah. So whoever takes a bribe and substitutes the [correct] ruling, and thus rules by other than the ruling of Allah, then he has disbelieved, oppressed, and acted immorally. This is also the view of as-Suddi; because it is what is evident from the address (*dhahir al-khattab*).[45]

41 See al-'Utaybi, *Ar-Rad' wat-Tabkit bil-Maqdisi*, the end of ch. 1, found at http://m-noor.com/showthread.php?t=3177.

42 The Arabic states '*hakim al-jawr*' which translates as 'the ruler of injustice'. If it were written as '*al-hakim al-jawr*' it would have been accurate to translate like Abu Khadijah had shared it. A slight difference but Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab had a reason in wording it the way he did.

43 And it is *ayah* no. 44 in al-Maidah: "Whoever does not judge by what Allah revealed, such are the *kafirun.*"

44 Surah al-Maidah: 44,45, 47.

45 Similar has been reported from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Hudhayfah from the *Sahabah*.

The final one left to clarify becomes almost as self-evident as the first one when compared with clearer words. Thus 'the one who claims knowledge of the unseen' is meant by 'the one who acts without knowledge'. And so when we put his ambiguous words under the light of his unambiguous words, we allow him to explain what he meant.

Summary

Abu Khadijah made the claim that the term *taghut* is being 'distorted by radical preachers to refer to disbelievers'. It was shown that such a claim is baseless and false; the term '*taghut*' being used in reference to disbelievers is the general consensus of the '*ulama* in-line with its usage in the Quran.[46] The misconception that may arise from some statements of Imam ibn 'Abdil-Wahhab in relation to the *taghut* was also clarified using his unambiguous speech to explain what he meant. And Allah knows best. May Allah send *salah* and *salam* upon our prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.

46 The implication of Abu Khadijah's claim is that all the Muslim scholars quoted in this essay are 'radical preachers'.

أهل التوحيد
Publications